

Meet your five Savanna Comics' Choice Comedy Awards Newcomer Showcase nominees

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Savanna Premium Cider, known for its crisp and dry taste and equally crisp, dry sense of humour, has supported the comedy industry for over 20 years. A brand that uplifts with humour and considers laughter a fundamental human right.

The five nominees competing for the ultimate title of the Savanna Newcomer were announced earlier in March. Post the Savanna Newcomer Showcase in February, hosted by the 2013 winner of this same title, Schalk Bezuidenhout, your top five nominees are Khanyisa Jam Jam, Mbali Gudazi, Vafa Naraghi, Vision Masango and Wazi Kunene. Each a worthy contender for this title. We spent time with each of them to get to know the people behind the laughs better.



Savanna nominee: Khanyisa Jam Jam

Khanyisa Jam Jam has been in the industry since 2019, and his first gig was at Nomad Bistro. "I have always loved to watch stand-up comedy and to make people laugh at school. Once I got invited to do my first gig, I knew it was something I wanted to do forever. Being nominated has already earned me the respect of my peers and fellow comics in the country, paving the way to bigger and better opportunities for me." With an autobiographical and thought-provoking style, he wants people to feel good after watching his performance. Inspired by his family and local comics, he has the honour of having KG Mokgadi and Kate Pinchuck as mentors. Fans can look forward to seeing his ensemble "Friendzone" and a one-person show in 2024.



Savanna nominee: Mbali Gumede

While working at Transnet Freight Rail in Pretoria, Mbali Gudazi's colleagues asked her to be MC at their year-end function. After excelling at her duties, her colleagues and manager encouraged her to do stand up. In April 2017, she tried stand-up for the first time at Wednesday Comedy Nights at Cappello, hosted by the late Vuyo Jiya, who played a massive role in her growth and understanding of stand-up comedy. "After my first time performing, I completely fell in love with it – I was happy inside! My first paid gig was in 2018, so I can say that I have been doing comedy professionally for five years now. This nomination, however, opens the door for more opportunities such as being a writer, acting, and even performing at international comedy festivals." Mbali's comedy style can be described as social commentary, talking about her observations and experiences in life. Mbali has big dreams: "one day I'm expecting to get a call from Netflix to do a stand-up comedy special for them, maybe 2025 or 2026?"



Savanna nominee: Vafa Naraghi

Qualified structural engineer Vafa Naraghi changed careers after six years and started doing stand-up comedy in 2018. "I see comedy as a beautiful tool to inspire change and uplift people – an important art form to develop and improve people's lives. The nomination is a sign of recognition from my peers in the industry who have trodden a similar path. It could act as a stepping stone to bigger and better things. I focus on storytelling that is relatable despite the obscurity of my unique experiences and views." Vafa's hopes and dreams are to inspire African people to pursue their dreams.



Savanna nominee: Vision Masango

Medical Scientist Vision Masango has always been a fan of stand-up comedy, but the deal with his parents was first to graduate and get a job. "I started doing stand-up comedy two months before lockdown and picked it up again in 2020 after lockdown. I made use of lockdown to write content and boost my confidence. In January 2021, I got my first paid gig! This nomination is a big deal to me because the validation of comedians in the industry is the one thing you need, and my number of paid gigs has already increased. Taylor Tomlinson and King Kandaro are my inspiration." Vision's comedy style can be described as clean comedy. Coming from a very religious family, he only performs clean comedy to ensure his family continues to support his dream. "Get ready, world; something huge is coming, and this is just the beginning."



Savanna nominee: Wazi Kunene

Wazi Kunene, the final nominee, encourages us to: "believe nothing my haters tell you!" Her story began as a scholar with a love for making people laugh. "I first understood the power and beauty of being funny in high school – you make people feel good, and they want to protect you in return. That's how we keep each other alive. Humour connects us. I love people, and comedy is one way of hugging someone without touching them. I started hustling for stage time in 2018, and by the end of that year, I had performed six times. Being nominated is a shift in my career and for many other women in comedy." Not willing to describe her comedy style yet, she is curious to hear the thoughts of the critics and audiences around the country." She is inspired by life and anyone who dares to honour the calling to be themselves. What's next? "Come and watch me win my first award on 15 April. It's going to be dope!"

"The Savanna Comedy Newcomer Award and the Comics' Choice Comedy winners will be announced on Saturday, 15 April, at a glamorous black-tie birthday celebration event at The Galleria in Sandton," says Kayla Hendricks, brand manager of Savanna Cider. "We are so excited to come together again – this time to celebrate the people who are passionate about keeping South Africans laughing, through the best and worst times. Nights like these help us keep our comedy industry alive, and ensures that those driving it feel as valued as they are by not only their peers in comedy, but also the South African people."

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Savanna is a premium, crisp apple cider with a distinctive dry taste. It is one of the largest cider brands in the world and is

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